

Middleborough Antiquarian

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An Old-Time Concert

MEMBERS OF THE Middleborough Historical Association recreate a scene from the past during a concert held on April 11, 1934. Front row, left to right, Flora Porter, unidentified, Ruth Wood, Alice Cunningham, Edith Gates, Mertie Whitbeck Romaine, Rose Pratt, Lottie Tinkham; second row, William Crapo, Henry Burkland, Hughie Rogers, George

Thomas (sitting); third row, Wirt B. Phillips, Doris Chase, Dorothy Johnston, Susie Thomas, Madeline Crossley, unidentified, Henrietta Burkland, two children unidentified; back row, unidentified, J. Stearns Cushing, Ernest Pratt, Theodore N. Wood, unidentified. (From the collection of the late Mr. and Mrs. Henry B. Burkland)

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A Message from the Editor

In this age of "disposable" everything, one is inclined to respect anything with a 30-year history. Add an association with a highly respected citizen of the community, and success is virtually guaranteed.

If that is truly the case, The Middleborough Antiquarian has an awful lot going for it as it begins its fourth decade of publication. Founded by Lawrence B. Romaine and edited for many years by his wife, Mertie E. Romaine, the Antiquarian has a long and distinguished history, and its pages are filled with the words of local historians and history buffs who cared deeply about this town and its past, saw the importance of recording its history and wanted to share its stories and traditions with the next generation.

The advantage to all this is that we begin a new chapter in the Antiquarian's life with the knowledge that those who have gone before have earned the publication an excellent reputation. The disadvantage, of course, is that we have to live up to it. In that effort, we hope to have the assistance of our readers, members of the association, and past contributors. We invite comments and suggestions from readers, encourage members of the association to offer advice and ideas, and welcome past and prospective contributors to come forward.

In this issue of the Antiquarian, we cover a variety of subjects ranging from Middleboro's flirtation with the Progressive Party to the types of lighting used by our ancestors. The connection between past and present is made in an article on the historic Leonard-Hall house, which is about to become the headquarters for the town-owned Pratt Farm conservation area. Our "editor emeritus," Mrs. Romaine, is mentioned in an article about her father, written by Association President Robert M. Beals.

Following this "double" issue of the Antiquarian, which is being published as such due to technical difficulties which prevented the publication of a fall issue, the publication will return to its quarterly schedule. The next issue will be published early this summer.

"By the way," there is another connection between present and past in this issue of the Antiquarian. My colleague, *Gazette* columnist Clint Clark, was the editor of the first issue of this publication and has since been a regular contributor. Following in his footsteps, and those of Mrs. Romaine, is a pleasure and an honor.

Jane Lopes
Editor

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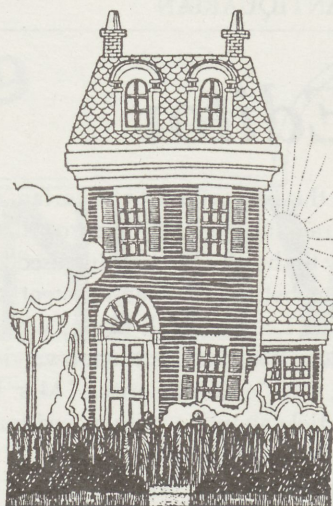
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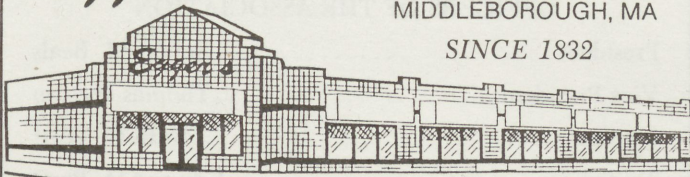
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An Enigma and a Rebirth

By Janet Griffith

"Brick houses were not common in Middleborough during the early years of the 19th century," wrote Susan Ceccacci, a consultant hired by Arthur Chase, a principal in Middleborough Park at 495.

Yet there it was, sitting at Middleborough Park's proposed entrance on Rte. 18—a circa 1820 building whose first floor was entirely made of brick. Not only was the main entrance to the house through this brick facade, but inside was a full-sized beehive oven, another indication that this was not an ordinary Middleboro home of the 19th century.

"The reason for the use of brick for the main facade is not easily explained," Ms Ceccacci wrote. "It may be a structural anomaly, perhaps related only to its situation on a hillside. It could also indicate that the ground floor may have originally been used for some commercial purpose. The house is said, according to local tradition, but undocumented, to have been a stage coach way-station on the New Bedford and Bridgewater Turnpike (Bedford Street) which passed in front of it. Nothing is presently known about the architecture typical of way stations. There are buildings along the old stage route (Route 2) in the Charlemont, Massachusetts area, none of which have yet been documented as having been way stations, which similarly have brick ground floors and wooden upper floors."

The Middleboro Historical Commission went on to search for documented proof that the house was a way-station or toll gate for the Turnpike. Interestingly enough, Anita Cole turned up an old postcard bearing the inscription, "Perez Leonard House 1803."

As a result of articles written in *The Middleboro Gazette*, Mrs. Fuller of the Lakeville Historical Commission offered to search the deeds at the Plymouth Registry. Another of their members called periodically to report on the conditions and activities at the site. Everyone seemed interested in our project to save the old place.

THE PEOPLE

Taunton's town records reveal that brothers James and



Henry Leonard were given permission to set up a bloomery at Two Mile River in 1652. It is claimed to be the first successful iron works in the United States, Saugus having failed. The Halls were among the first families of Taunton, George being a proprietor and clerk of the bloomery. The Leonards inter-married with the Halls for many generations.

Caleb B. Hall⁵, (James⁴, James³, John², George¹) (1764—1845), married Betsey Leonard (1775—1833), daughter of Perez Leonard and Elizabeth Eaton of N. Middleborough. Caleb B. Jr. (1800—1876) was born in Taunton and married Lydia Leonard of Middleborough, where they lived on a farm inherited through his mother, Betsy Leonard, and grandmother Elizabeth Eaton Leonard.

Jonathan L. Hall eventually inherited the 30-acre farm. The 1879 map of Middleborough shows his widow, Mrs. J. Hall, living there. In 1900, she and the other siblings of Jonathan sold, for \$800, the 30 acres, with the buildings, to Leonard Lewis. "L. Lewis," is listed as having owned the house in 1903.

Perez Leonard was descended from James and Henry Leonard. His mother was Joanna Tobey Spooner. His father married a second time, Lucy Pratt Turner. The Pratts and Leonards had established a forge on Trout Brook in Middleborough in 1700. At this same time, Col. Thomas Leonard operated a forge where the Tack Factory was later built. By

1819, the Leonard, Pratt iron business had grown and they removed to Wareham where they owned a forge and bloomery. The firm was later known as The Wareham Iron Company.

Perez Leonard married first Silence Alden, secondly, Elizabeth, daughter of Barnabas Eaton, who owned the Eaton Tavern in N. Middleborough along the old Turnpike. Barnabas was the grandson of the Rev. Samuel Fuller, Francis Eaton, and Martha Billington.

Elizabeth (Eaton) Leonard, widow of Perez, sold to Caleb B. Hall, Sr. a certain parcel of Fresh Meadow bounded on the south by her brother-in-law David Weston's land, north and west by Seth Eaton's land, and on the east by Purchase Brook containing four acres.

In 1828, Caleb bought four acres, 20 rods from David Richmond of Middleborough bounded by Deacon Benjamin Richmond's land.

After Betsey Leonard died in 1833, Caleb and his brothers signed off the rights to the Middleborough place. The four acres, 20 rods, he bought from David Richmond for \$42 on Purgatory Road, so-called, was sold back to Richmond for the same price.

Caleb, Jr. sold for \$100 to Thomas Washburn, 1/6 part of the farm on which he lived containing 40 acres with buildings thereon, being the right which fell to him by his mother and bounded on the west by the Turnpike Road, northerly by a road, northerly and easterly formerly belonging to the heirs of Solomon Eaton, southerly by land of Daniel Eaton.

PURCHASE

Across from the end of Clay Street is a cartway through the land once owned by Thomas Washburn (Walling's 1855 map of Middleborough). It leads to a place along Purchase Brook called "The Old City" where several small houses for the workers were situated. Calvin and Levy Murdock manufactured brick here in the late 1700s and early 1800s. They later sold their enterprise to George Sampson. Also located on Purchase Brook was a puddling mill where iron "pigs" were brought from the Taunton works and melted down to make shovels and hollow ware.

The descendants of Mayflower passenger Francis Eaton owned most of the land in Purchase. However, in the early 1800s, James Leonard owned most of the land north of Centre Street, some of which he gave to the Central Baptist Society for a burial place. The Eaton Cemetery is located on Old Centre Street behind the house where Sarah Dennis White lived. Across from this house is a road that goes into the woods to the puddling mill. This road continues through the woods to Everett Street, making its exit opposite the Richard Sampson house.

It's no wonder that, with the fires of the forge shooting skyward, sparks from the melting of iron, hammering of metal, and smoke from the smoldering bricks and charcoal curling

forth, one of the many roads leading to industrious Purchase, was referred to as "Purgatory Road."

TAVERNS AND TOLLGATES

The Jewett Place, "approached by a circular drive" stood on the corner of Longpoint Road and the Turnpike. This house was a toll gate. At the following intersection, at Highland Road, was Sampson's Tavern and toll gate.

Not far away at the junction of what is now Rts. 18 and 105, was the official beginning of the New Bedford-Boston Turnpike. There stood the Washburn house, built in 1803 by James Washburn, first postmaster of Middleborough. This place was later known as the King Phillip Tavern, which burned to the ground in 1918.

At the intersection of Bedford Street and Rhode Island Road, (Rte. 79), stood another large house in the Haskins neighborhood, where *Weston's History* tells of a tavern in that section. The house has since been torn down.

Next, on the southeastern corner of Taunton Avenue, the Zebulon Leonard house stands. Mrs. Vigers' *Lakeville History* calls this house "The Old Henry Pratt House," and it was used as a stagecoach stop. The present owner confirmed this when he reportedly found shelves and an old tavern sign behind a partition in the barn. The Leonard-Hall House is situated on the southeastern corner of an important Colonial roadway and was approached by a circular drive. Close by was the Solomon Eaton Tavern, near the corner of Plymouth Street. This place was also operated as a toll gate which stopped traffic before going over the bridge into Bridgewater.

If the Leonard-Hall House was not a toll gate, it was the only house which stood at an intersection along the Turnpike which did not collect tolls. As on the toll roads of today, it would seem that no entrance nor exit could be gained to the New Bedford-Boston Turnpike without proceeding through a toll gate.

As a result of all the local interest in the house, it was not demolished, as was originally planned, to make way for development. Mr. Chase arranged for the building to be moved to a town-owned piece of land on Wood Street, and donated \$10,000 toward its restoration. The town made a matching contribution, and a committee was formed to find a use for the house, which has been altered a great deal over the years, but which has much of its original interior woodwork and details.

The Leonard House Committee, working with the Pratt Farm Committee and the Conservation Commission, plans to have the house moved up the street to the Pratt Farm, where it will serve as a headquarters for the town-owned conservation area, a nature center and a meeting place for the Conservation Commission, Historical Commission and other town boards. The house will be placed roughly on the foundation of the farmhouse which once stood on the Pratt Farm.

Janet Griffith, an authority on local history, is the former chairman of the Middleboro Historical Commission.

The Hats Were In the Ring:

Bull Moose Progressivism in Middleboro and the Nation

By Michael Maddigan

Though progressive Republicanism was never as influential along the East Coast as it was in the West and Midwest, it did create an enormous pull on sympathies of Middleboro voters. At the start of this century, as many of the state's urban voters began taking to the Democratic Party, many rural communities in southeastern Massachusetts, including Middleboro, began developing a progressive Republican bent. The high water mark of progressive Republicanism in Middleboro was the brief period of 1912-13. During that time, the Progressive (Bull Moose) Party, under the aegis of Theodore Roosevelt, exerted a tremendous impact upon the political life of both the town and the nation. The 1912 presidential campaign brought both Roosevelt and President William Howard Taft to Middleboro in a clash of progressive and conservative Republicanism. The 1914 elections, however, sounded the death knell for Bull Moose Progressivism in Middleboro as previously disaffected progressive Republicans returned to the fold of a liberalizing Republican Party or joined the ranks of the burgeoning Democratic Party.

Bull Moose Progressivism, itself, was an indirect consequence of a political maneuver made by Roosevelt. Following election to the White House in his own right in November, 1904, the progressive Roosevelt renounced a third term for himself as president in the "bully pulpit," though this did not prevent him from personally hand-picking his successor — Secretary of War William Howard Taft. Despite a year-long African safari with his son Kermit followed by a triumphal European tour, Roosevelt could not arrest the presidential itch and by February, 1912, considering Taft disloyal to the cause of progressive Republicanism, Roosevelt declared, "My hat is in the ring" for a third presidential term.

Vying with Roosevelt for the Republican bid were progressive Wisconsin Senator Robert "Battle Bob" La Follette, who sought to deprive Roosevelt of the mantle of progressive Republicanism, and President Taft, candidate of the conservative or "stand pat" Republicans. La Follette virtually disqualified himself at the beginning of February with a rambling and incoherent speech, a consequence of overwork, while Taft had his own drawbacks. Taft's tendency to fall asleep in public (once, as a front row mourner, he drifted off at a funeral to the utter horror of his military aide, Archie Butt), his obvious corpulence, his heavy reliance upon arch-conservative Speaker of the House "Uncle Joe" Cannon of Massachusetts and his responsibility for the loss of the House Republican majority in the 1910 election were all detriments to the Taft campaign. Nor did it help that the president self-deprecatingly referred to himself as both a "cornered rat" and a "straw man" in the campaign.

In contrast, the dynamic T. R. was enormously popular with the rank and file Republican voters and he hoped to win numerous delegates in the 13 presidential primaries, 1912 being the maiden year of the primary system. The Massachusetts primary was scheduled for Tuesday, April 30, and both Roosevelt and Taft spent much time in the commonwealth posturing for the event.

On Friday evening, April 26, President Taft gave a major address in Boston which left him physically and emotionally exhausted. Taft told the Boston audience, "I do not want to fight Theodore Roosevelt, but sometimes a man in a corner fights. I am going to fight." At Boston, Taft raised the third term issue, concerned that Colonel Roosevelt "should not have as many terms as his natural life will permit." Ironically, it was just this issue which was responsible for a foiled assassination attempt of Roosevelt by a disgruntled New York bartender in October in Milwaukee.

Roosevelt was the first of the two contenders to speak in Middleboro, arriving April 27, three days before the primary. Roosevelt's stop in Middleboro was part of his second trip to New England since the beginning of April. Interrupting the New England tour was a side journey to Kansas and Nebraska which nearly cost T. R.'s voice, so strenuous were the speaking engagements. Because of the strain of the tour, Roosevelt knew it would be futile to mount a full-scale railroad car campaign when he returned to New England at the end of April. "It is folly to try to make me continue a car-tail campaign," he said.

Consequently, Roosevelt scheduled appearances only at Fall River, New Bedford and Boston for the morning and evening of the 27th. Due to the efforts of the local Roosevelt Club, however, the itinerary was altered to include brief stops in Brockton, Middleboro and Taunton.

Arriving from Brockton one hour before the scheduled arrival time of 12:30, Roosevelt's motorcade of nearly 12 autos dressed with streamers and enormous Roosevelt placards, came to a halt at the Station Street depot. Roosevelt addressed the crowd of approximately 1,500 from his auto.

Frustrating the Colonel's initial attempts to speak, several motors remained annoyingly running, whereupon Roosevelt protested, asserting, "I cannot talk against the hum of industry." He continued:

It is a pleasure to be in Massachusetts and to ask your support in as clean drawn a fight between the people and the professional politicians as there ever was in history. We who fight as progressive Republicans fight more than a factional or party fight. The people have a right to rule themselves, to bring justice, social and industrial, to all in this nation. I want justice for the big and little man alike, with special privilege to none. I am glad to see you

Upon the conclusion of the Colonel's remarks, the motorcade began to proceed, but was impeded by the crowd, surging towards Roosevelt, anxious to shake his hand.

and to fight your fight. Put through next Tuesday in Massachusetts what Illinois and Pennsylvania have done (T. R. swept both of those states' primaries).

...I ask Massachusetts to support us in this campaign, not because it is easy, but because it is hard. I appeal to you because this is the only kind of fight worth getting into, the kind of fight where the victory is worth winning and where the struggle is difficult. Here in Massachusetts, as elsewhere, we have against us the enormous preponderance of the forces that win victory in ordinary political contests.

Upon the conclusion of the Colonel's remarks, the motorcade began to proceed, but was impeded by the crowd, surging towards Roosevelt, anxious to shake his hand. The *Gazette* reported "for a minute it appeared that an accident could not be averted." Fortunately, no such accident occurred.

Because Roosevelt had not been anticipated to arrive until after noon, workers from the George E. Keith Company shoe plant on Sumner Avenue had only begun trekking over the Centre Street railroad bridge at noon when they came upon the departing hero, who graciously stopped and shook nearly 100 hands. Roosevelt then departed for Taunton, escorted by Spanish-American War veterans and Mayor Fish of the city.

Two days later, on Monday, April 29, one day before the primary, President Taft arrived in a special train in Middleboro at 12:30 to speak before a crowd estimated at 2,000. It is extremely doubtful that Taft would have stopped in town had it not been for Roosevelt's presence a few days earlier. Despite the large crowd, the president was, according to the *Gazette*, "rather coolly received, there being but a faint cheer." Taft was introduced to the crowd by Town Republican Committee Chairman George W. Stetson. Still reeling from an address made by Roosevelt on April 3 in Louisville, Kentucky, making much of the Republican bosses' support for Taft, the president was clearly on the defensive in Middleboro:

Ladies and Gentlemen. I am very sorry to take up your time to listen to a voice nearly gone. I come here from a strong sense of duty. It does not make any real difference to me whether I am re-elected President or not so far as my comfort and happiness and reputation are concerned. I fancy, after having had three years' experience in the Presidency, I could find softer and easier places than that, and I am willing to trust to the future for vindication of my name from the aspersions upon it... (but) if I permit attacks unfounded upon me, I go back on those whom I am leading in that cause (of progress).

Therefore, I have come here, I cannot help it, and I have got to look into your eyes and tell you the truth as near as know it.

It is said that all the bosses are supporting me. I deny

it. Mr. Roosevelt and I are exactly alike in certain respects, a good deal of human nature in both of us and when we are running for office we do not examine the clothes or the hair or previous condition of anybody that tenders support. But the only way by which he can make true the statement that all the bosses are supporting me and none of the bosses are supporting him but are opposed to him is to give a new definition to "bosses" and that is that every man in politics that is against him is a boss and every man that is for him is a leader.

Following the speech, the train left for Boston amidst cheers as Taft waved a flag. One ironic side note to the Middleboro speech did not bode well for Taft. Upon Taft's arrival, a local man decided to welcome the president with a cheer. "Three cheers for Ted Roosevelt!", he cried. Realizing his gaffe, he quickly corrected himself, "I mean President Taft." Taft, within earshot, remained unruffled. Smiling, he told the would-be cheerleader in his stentorian tone, "Don't make that mistake tomorrow."

Apparently, many Middleboro voters did make just that "mistake," for the primary vote in Middleboro heavily favored Roosevelt. The primary was called to order promptly at 6 a.m. by clerk Chester E. Weston and "voting was immediately in order." Of 635 Middleboro Republicans voting, 406 gave their preferential vote to Roosevelt, 184 to Taft and a dismal 5 to La Follette. The town also voted nearly 3-1 for the slate of Roosevelt delegates.

Of all 13 primaries, the Massachusetts contest witnessed the closest race between Roosevelt and Taft. Taft took 86,722 Massachusetts votes, followed by Roosevelt's 83,099 and La Follette's 2,058.

The popular vote notwithstanding, the Massachusetts outcome was indecisive for, though Taft won the preferential by slightly more than 3,500 (technically making him the victor), Roosevelt's slate of 8 at-large delegates trounced Taft's slate by some 8,000 votes. Roosevelt, perhaps a little disparagingly, wrote his friend, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts: "Well, isn't the outcome in Massachusetts comic? Apparently there were about 80,000 people who preferred Taft, about 80,000 who preferred me and from three to five thousand who, in an involved way, thought they would vote both for Taft and me!"

The final primary was held the first week of June. Of the 13, Roosevelt won nine, losing Wisconsin and North Dakota to La Follette and his native New York and Massachusetts to Taft. As a consequence, Roosevelt received 278 delegates, Taft 48 and La Follette 36.

Because of his victory in the primaries, Roosevelt could joke about the skewed Massachusetts results, but the Massachusetts outcome would cause further clamor at the Republican con-

“The Massachusetts delegation would shout: “Massachusetts 18!
Massachusetts 18! Roosevelt first, last and all the time!”

vention held in Chicago, June 18-22. At Chicago, Taft hoped his control of the National Committee and the southern delegations (whose states did not hold primaries) would offset Roosevelt's popularity.

The first order of convention business was to elect a temporary chairman and the Massachusetts delegation split evenly between Taft-backed Elihu Root and Wisconsin Governor Francis E. McGovern, whose backing by Roosevelt was a concession to appease the La Follette forces. Root squeaked by, 558-501, with the vote of each delegate being taken individually. The close vote set the tone for the remainder of the convention, which the Taft forces intended to dominate by denying Roosevelt's disputation of the credentials of some 250 Taft delegates, and which the Roosevelt forces were determined to keep in turmoil.

During the frequent lulls in convention activity, the New Jersey delegation would rise on cue and begin cheering for Roosevelt. T. R.'s young cousin Nicholas Roosevelt would later recall how the New Jersey delegation would generally be followed by the Massachusetts delegation which, in a cheer led by historian and Harvard professor Albert Bushnell Hart, would shout: “Massachusetts 18! Massachusetts 18! Massachusetts 18! Roosevelt first, last and all the time!” (the 18 referring to the state's number of electoral votes).

On Saturday, June 22, nominating began with Taft being nominated by fellow Ohioan Warren G. Harding who, by calling Taft “the greatest progressive of the age,” must surely have made Roosevelt apoplectic. The only other name place in nomination was that of La Follette.

Though most Roosevelt delegates abstained from voting at the direction of Roosevelt, there were no serious problems until the vote of the Massachusetts delegation was called. The chairman of the delegation responded that the Commonwealth “casts all 18 votes for Taft with 18 abstentions.” When the tally was questioned, a roll of the individual Massachusetts delegates was called, the first being Frederick Fosdick, pledged to Roosevelt.

Fosdick: Present, but I refuse to vote. (cheering)

Root (silencing the crowd and leaning from the platform): You have been sent here by your state to vote. If you refuse to do your duty, your alternate will be called upon.

Fosdick: No man on God's earth can make me vote in this convention.

Root then made good his threat and called upon Fosdick's alternate who, due to the contradictory primary results in Massachusetts, happened to be a Taft man. Root continued through the Massachusetts delegation, calling each alternate, whereby Taft succeeded in gaining two votes.

Though the convention was not stopped following the inter-

ruption, Roosevelt was livid over the Massachusetts outcome. In the July 6 issue of *The Outlook*, an irate T. R. labelled his former friend and Secretary of State Root a “modern Autolycus, the snapper-up of unconsidered trifles” who “publicly raped at the last moment (two delegates) from Massachusetts.”

Roosevelt refused to consider a compromise candidate such as associate Supreme Court Justice Charles Evans Hughes (who would lose to Wilson in 1916) or Missouri Governor Herbert S. Hadley. Said Roosevelt: “I'll name the compromise candidate. He'll be me. I'll name the compromise platform. It will be our platform.” Subsequently, Taft won the nomination with 561 votes to Roosevelt's 107, La Follette's 41, Iowa Senator Cummins' 17 and Hughes' 2. However, 344 Roosevelt delegates had abstained from voting.

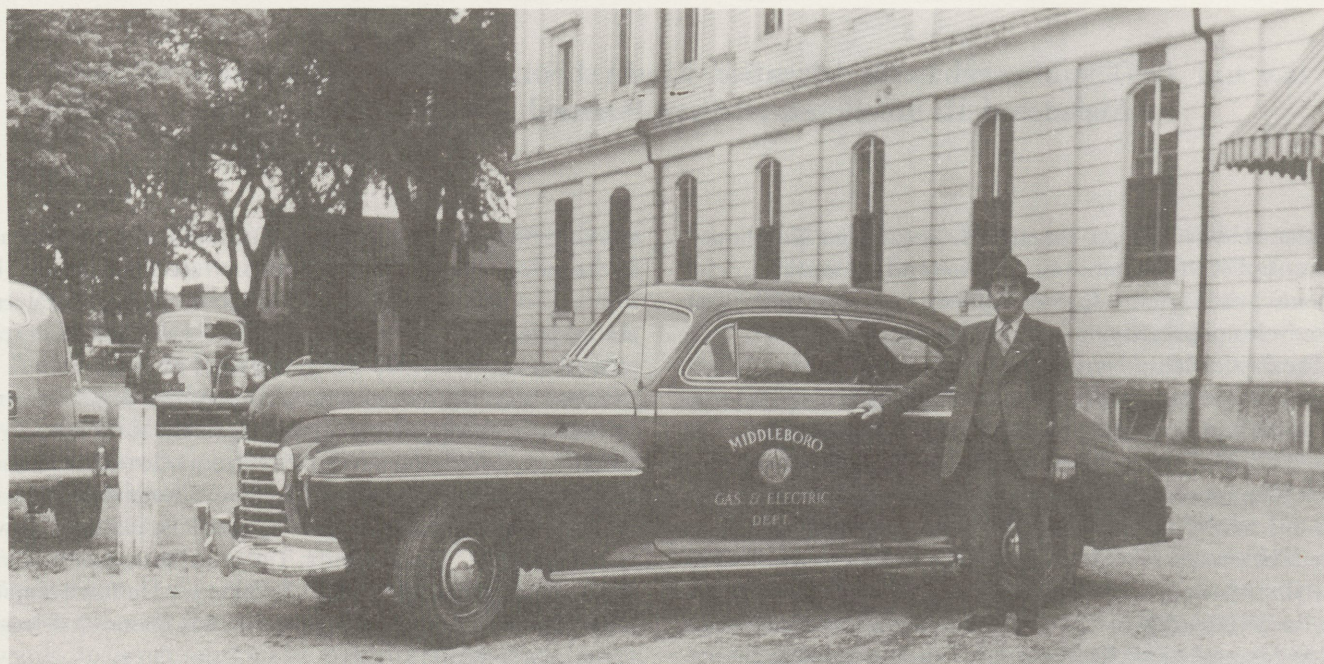
A week later, the Democratic National Convention was convened in Baltimore and today is notable for being as inharmonious as the Republican Convention of the previous week. In contention for the nomination were House Speaker “Champ” Clark of Missouri, New Jersey reform Governor Woodrow Wilson, Senator Judson Harmon of Ohio and House Majority Leader Oscar Underwood of Alabama. Later in the balloting, the name of Massachusetts Governor Eugene N. Foss, to whom the majority of Massachusetts delegates were pledged, was put forth, but the momentum had already begun to swing towards Wilson, who was elected on the 46th ballot. The selection of Wilson relieved many delegates who had from the start been opposed to Clark, embarrassed by his testimonial for Electric Bitters: “It seemed that all the organs in my body were out of order, but three bottles of Electric Bitters made me all right.”

The following month, Roosevelt formally bolted the Republican Party to form the Progressive (Bull Moose) Party which took its nickname from the Colonel's statement that he was “as fit as a bull moose.” The Progressive platform called for workmen's compensation, minimum wages for women, the establishment of a federal regulatory commission in industry and the prohibition of child labor. The party was financed, in part, by George W. Perkins, a partner in the House of Morgan, who became known as the “Dough Moose.” Taft, too, had financial difficulties. When the Republican National Committee made it known that it once again expected the President's elder half-brother Charley to pick up the tab, Charley Taft protested, “I am not made of money!”

When it was suggested that Taft and Roosevelt cooperate to prevent a Democratic victory, T. R. responded, “I hold that Mr. Taft stole the nomination, and I do not feel like arbitrating with a pickpocket as to whether or not he shall keep my watch.”

The 1912 presidential election in Middleboro was basically a repetition of the primary. Though Roosevelt won Middleboro, he lost the state to Wilson. Of 1,358 votes in Middleboro's

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STANDING BESIDE his official "G&E" car, a 1941 Oldsmobile coupe, is George Philbrook, father of Middleboro historian Mertie Romaine and the town's

fire chief as well as the "key man" in the Gas and Electric Department.

"A Good Man, A Great Asset"

By Robert M. Beals
President, Middleborough Historical Association

On June 7, 1944, 400 people, representing 42 communities, tendered George A. Philbrook a reception and banquet to honor his 50 years of service to the town of Middleboro. Warm and heartfelt praise was given in full measure to him as a faithful servant of the community, as a friend, as a good neighbor, and as a father with whom it was a "singular happy and tranquil experience to live," according to his daughter, Mertie E. (Whitbeck) Romaine.

The event was held in the auditorium of the Town Hall. George A. Philbrook had served those many years as the "key man" in the gas and electric service, 36 years in the fire department, of which eight were served as chief, and superintendent of its fire alarm system.

He was born in Woburn, Massachusetts on April 3, 1870, the son of William H. and Mary (Wentworth) Philbrook. After graduating from public school, he entered the employ of the Thomson-Houston Company (now General Electric) of Lynn. He spent about one year with the Narragansett Electric Light Co. of Providence, Rhode Island, and then returned to the Thomson-Houston Co. On Memorial Day, 1894, he came to Middleboro to be interviewed by John N. Main, the first man-

ger of the municipal electric plant. Mr. Philbrook took charge of the power station on June 4, 1894 and held the position of superintendent and manager of the gas and electric plant until his passing in 1945.

Not many people of our day would be so dedicated to their jobs that they would work for over 50 years without ever taking a vacation. It is also to be said that this man never assigned a job to anyone that he was not willing to do himself.

In 1913, Mr. Philbrook purchased property on South Main Street near the corner of East Grove Street from Judge Dennis D. Sullivan. The house had been built in 1855 by Captain John M. Soule. Mrs. Romaine lived in the house for several years after her father's death on November 10, 1945.

As mentioned before, George Philbrook was connected with the fire department for 36 years, beginning when he joined the old Hose Co. No. 6. In 1915, he was appointed assistant chief of the department, and in 1929, became chief engineer when he succeeded Carlton W. Maxim. His duties with the department included the superintendency of the fire alarm system. I recall back in the mid-1930s when I lived at 14 East Grove St. My bedroom window looked out over some of the backyards of other property on that street to the rear of the Philbrook home. Chief Philbrook drove a white 1934 Buick convertible

(continued on page 15)

Let There Be Light

By Elizabeth J. Snow

The Middleborough Historical Association is indeed fortunate to have among its treasures a most unique exhibit of early lighting devices ranging from clay lamps of the ancient world to gas lights of the early 20th century. Much of this collection was a most generous gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Hall.

Among the items of special interest are two clau pan lamps, said to have come from the catacombs in Rome, while another one, purchased in Holland, was used in the first century. There are several rush lights and candle holders. One large iron candle stick was used in the first Catholic "Church" about 1870. The services at that time were held in the P. H. Peirce store on North Main Street.

We can readily see the changes and improvements in the methods of lighting, however slow, in studying this collection. For centuries ways of lighting were primitive and costly. Many references to light are found in the Bible. This passage from Exodus tells us that olive oil was used: "and thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they shall bring the pure olive oil beaten for the light to cause the lamp to burn always."

From ancient times until the first colonists landed on these shores there was but little change in the kinds of lamps available. In England, pan lamps were commonly made of metal instead of clay and we usually see iron ones in museums today.

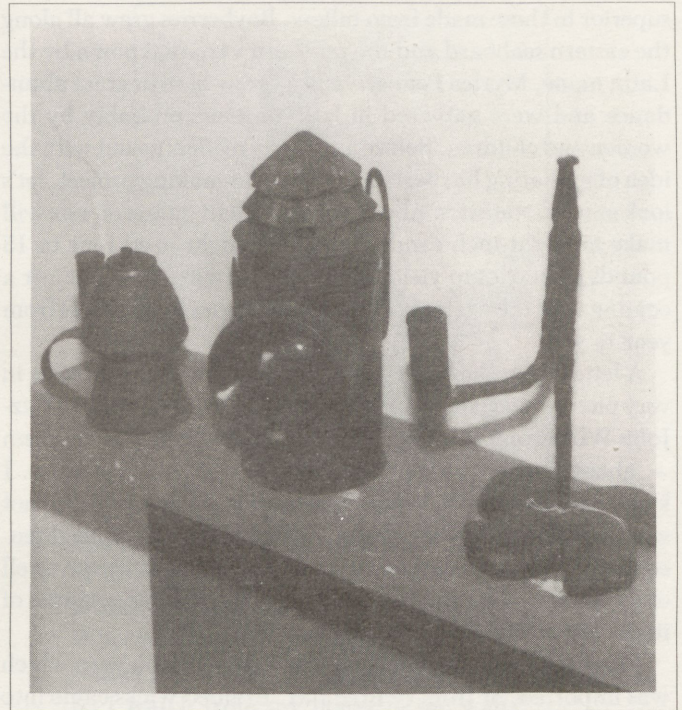
The more primitive type called a crusie was simply a pear-shaped dish with a channel for the wick. Another familiar type is called a "Bette" lamp, possibly so named from the German or Dutch word meaning "better." This had a support for the wick, a cover and a half-curved handle over the top, so that it could be easily carried or hung up.

Wicks were made from moss, weeds, cotton, flax or other burnable fibers, and fuel was whatever anyone could get—grease, fish oil, linseed oil, etc.

Among the records of the Plymouth colony which have been handed down, we find from existing wills and inventories, the following: ten candlesticks of iron, pewter and brass, three lanterns and four lamps of brass, copper and zinc.

When the early settlers built their homes in the place called Middleberry, they depended mainly upon daylight. Even on bright days the houses were rather dark, due to the unpainted walls and window panes, for the most part made of oiled paper. In later years, the oiled paper might be replaced by casement windows with the diamond glass panes.

Besides the light from the fire, pine knots and splints were also used. Higginson, writing in 1630, says, "Our pine trees that are the most plentiful of all wood doth allow us plenty of candles—and they are such candles as the Indians commonly use—they are cloven into slices somewhat thin which are so full of the moisture of turpentine and pitch that they burn as clear



EARLY LIGHTING devices included the policeman's lantern, center, which operated on whale oil. At left is a miner's lamp.

as a torch."

William Wood, another early writer, stated, "Out of these pines is gotten the Candlewood, is much spoke of, which may serve as a shift among the poor folks, but I cannot commend it for singular good, because it drippeth a pitchy kind of substance where it stands."

Pine knots provided light by being burned on flat stones set into recesses in the side of the fireplace.

In late summer, rushes were gathered in meadows near brooks and ponds. A similar type of rush would have been familiar to those who came from country places in England, and were gathered on St. Michaelmas Day, the 25th of September.

Juncus effuses, the variety of rush which grew in this area, was found in clumps, having light green stems and an insignificant brownish bloom. If enough of the stem is peeled away the white cotton-like pith inside provides a wick which will soak up grease or oil. After the rush had been soaked it was put away to harden. Rush lights were burned in simple iron holders. Some were made to be set on a table, while others could be hung on a wall. A rush light, two feet in length, when placed in a holder at a 45-degree angle, will burn about 40 minutes. Undoubtedly the saying, "burning your candle at both ends," refers to lighting a rush light at both ends.

The first families to settle in Middleboro were surely aware of using bayberry wax for making candles which were far superior to those made from tallow. Bayberries grew all along the eastern seaboard and the northern variety, known by the Latin name, *Myrica Pennsylvanica*, grew here in great abundance and were gathered in late summer, probably by the women and children. Before any of the readers go out with the idea of gathering bayberries for a candle-making project, let's look at some statistics. About one and a half quarts of wax will make an eight-inch candle, and you might need four to 15 pounds of berries to yield one pound of wax, which is just a coating over the seeds of the plant and varies in thickness from year to year.

A letter from the late 17th century tells us about candles in very picturesque language when Walt Winthrop wrote to Fitz-John Winthrop in October 1695 saying, "I shall send by them — about twenty-three pounds, which is all I can procure. I know not whether there may be any mixture in it which is not so will discerned by the colour (which is preserved or heightened by melting in a brass kettle and lost in iron) as by the smell of the snuffe of the candle which gives a delicate perfume of itself, but stinks if adulterated."

For many years wicking was made from cotton yarn which was imported, or from twisted flax. Braided wicks came into use in 1825, and not many candle molds were in use until the 1800s.

As time went on there were candle-makers who went from house to house to make up a year's supply of candles for the family.

Since few people had clocks, public events were announced to be held, "at early candlelight."

Thomas Weston states in his history that bees were kept for wax, as much as for honey, since beeswax was considered superior, and from long tradition had been used for church candles.

One of the old superstitions about candles says, "When the candle burns blue, ghosts walk."

Since few people had clocks, public events like prayer meetings, for example, were announced to be held, "at early candlelight."

We might be astonished at the number of candles that were used during a weekend at Oliver Hall, when before the Revolution, Judge Oliver entertained important guests. Imagine dining with a beautiful chandelier above the table, candlesticks of silver and brass around the room as well as shining sconces, then called candle arms, on the walls.

For 200 years or more candles were probably a better source of light than the many kinds of lamps which gradually came into use. Among those in the museum collection there is a lamp that burned lard oil, a Kelly lamp like one that was used by Florence Nightingale, a small night light called a fairy lamp, a petticoat lamp, an early type used in the transition period between candles and whale oil lamps, a spice warmer, a Sandwich glass whale oil lamp, and an astral lamp. This type was quite an improvement over the others, since the reservoir for oil was in a round flattened shape, it cast no shadow on the table. It had an Argand burner with a circular wick allowing a current of air inside as well as out, so that it burned with a brighter flame. This type of burner was invented about 1823.

How proud the housewife must have been when she was able to have a kerosene lamp in her home.

How proud the housewife must have been when she was able to have a kerosene lamp in her home. We can picture her in a long dress and bonnet in the Peirce store perhaps, studying the new lamps, and after much deliberation, choosing one for the parlor table.

The tinder box with its bits of rag and pieces of flint and steel for striking a spark, had been relegated to the attic, and even spills were seldom used, since friction matches made lighting the lamps much easier. They had been invented in England in 1827.

These verses by Edgar Guest give us an interesting definition of spills.

Spills

When grate fires kept the room aglow
Against December's biting chill,
My father, often bending low,
Within the flame would light a spill.
"Now what's a spill?" the children ask,
"A roll of paper," I reply,
"And years ago it was my task,
The mantel holder to supply."

His pipe or reading lamp to light
He'd take that little paper roll,
And hold it so it would ignite
When held against a burning coal.
Some matches were expensive then
And mother watched the household bills,
On mantel shelves for smoking men
Was always kept a jar of spills

(continued on page 15)

A Visit From "Mrs. Tom"

To the President and the Board of Trustees
Middleborough Public Library

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Middleborough:

I think that you would be interested
In something that happened to me,
When, at midnight, I went to the Library
To get a forgotten key.
All was calm and serene and quiet
With a peace so deep and profound
That I lingered a while to enjoy it,
When -in the stillness- I heard a sound.
As I turned to see what caused it,
My eyes grew wide with surprise
As a shadowy figure approached me,
One of very diminutive size!
She smiled as she came toward me
And said, "From my picture frame, I've come
(Once a year pictures come to life, you know)
I'm so very happy to know you. I'm Mrs. Tom
Thumb!"
She said, "I can only see the reference room
As in my picture frame, I stand,
But I know there have been many changes
And I'd like to see them firsthand."
I invited, "Come look at the stackroom.
We have over 70,000 books, you know,
And observe the new lights between shelving,
You can see even the bottom row."
We stopped and looked at the charge desk
And she worked the charge machine.
She said, "How very much faster
Than the old way that I've seen."
She clapped her hands with great delight
When -using the copy-machine-
I copied a picture of "General Tom"
From the page of a magazine!
Next on our tour was the Children's Room.
"So light and attractive, said she,
And the books, themselves, so different now
With such colorful pictures to see."
She exclaimed over our record collection.
"Over nine hundred strong!"
She listened entranced to our Stereo
As I played her favorite song.
I showed her the cranberry room,
Full of cranberry history and lore.
The only one of its kind to be found
If you search from shore to shore.
She wondered how many books went out.



I said, "Over 95,000 this time."
She gasped at the size of our budget
"I remember when it was \$6,000," she chimed.
She spoke of the many young people
Who use the reference hall.
"I like to see them come and go
As I watch from my place on the wall."
"I remember the days when libraries were dark,
Places of silence and gloom.
I like it so much better now
In this bright and cheerful room.
I like the fact that there's music,
It's a busy active hive.
I like to hear the children laugh,
It makes it warm and alive.
Now it's time for me to go
Back to my picture frame.
I thank you for my library tour.
I'm very glad I came.
I like the things you've shown me,
I like the modern ways.
Things are really better than they were
Back in the good old days."
So, Mr. and Mrs. Middleborough,
I felt you should hear the thoughts,
Of this little visitor of yesterday,
On the changes time has wrought.
And when you look at her picture,
As the days and years go by,
Remember the night that we looked around.
Just "Mrs. Tom" and I.

Eleanor E. Tompkins
Librarian
1965 Town Report

Perspective on the Past

By Phyllis Holt — Valedictorian

Middleboro has had its moments in history.

Plymouth boasts a beginning in 1620, but we can outdo even that. Middleboro at that time was a thriving Indian settlement called Nemasket. The name is from the Indian words "nemah," meaning "fish" and "et," meaning "the place of" - "the place of fish."

To us, of course, Middleboro is worthy of special attention, but would you ever believe that it actually led a charmed existence? In 1616, there was a great Indian plague which wiped out whole villages, leaving only death in its wake. Strangely enough, as it approached Middleboro, it parted and continued on its path of death, sparing for the most part the settlement here.

The Nemaskets were constantly warring with the Narragansetts. Once when the Indian fort was guarded by only eight Indians, Narragansetts were spotted creeping about. Showing typical quick-wittedness and sagacity, the eight quickly donned their blankets and weapons, slipped out the back door along the bank, and then boldly walked in the front door of the fort. They repeated this until the foe retreated — afraid to attack such a well-guarded fort.

Those who dared to wander from the Plymouth settlement constituted Middleboro's first settlers. Although the majority were sons and daughters of the 1620ers, we also claimed some two or three of the original Mayflower voyagers.

In 1669, the settlement was incorporated into the town of Middlebury, later to become Middleboro. It is interesting to know that the other Middleboro in the world is located in England, and that letters from both Europe and the South Pacific, addressed to just Middleboro, have reached here safely.

In 1676, one of the bloodiest and most destructive wars in the history of New England broke out. King Philip's War was a conspiracy to wipe out all the white settlements and Middleboro was right in the thick of the plot and the battle. The incident which actually caused the outbreak happened right up here on Assawompset Pond.

There was a Nemasket Indian preacher named John Sassamon who was an apostle of John Eliot. When he learned of Philip's plans, he notified the Plymouth authorities. He was evidently found out, for only a week later his body was found under the ice of Assawompset. The murderers were found to be Indians who were tried and condemned to death by the Plymouth court. This so enraged Philip that he made his attack shortly after.

Middleboro was right in the midst of the attack. Every building was burned. No property was spared. However, the majority of the colonists found refuge in the fort on the river.

The Indians tried to provoke an attack by sending an Indian

To us, of course, Middleboro is worth of special attention, but would you ever believe it actually led a charmed existence?

up near the hand-rock to taunt the whites with insulting words and gestures. The colonists shot him from a distance of 155 rods with a gun 7 feet, 4 1/4 inches long. It was so heavy that they had to rest it on a man's shoulder.

The atrocities during this war were numerous. Both the Indians and whites were offenders. When Philip was killed, the English had him beheaded and had his head erected on a pole in Plymouth where it remained on public exhibition for over 20 years. The Indian who shot him preserved his right hand in rum and collected pennies from its exhibition.

Middleboro, like most places, had its share of characters and famous personalities. One woman named Hannah Reed used to walk to Boston in a day to shop. She was evidently quite rugged, for once a clerk bet that he dared kiss her. He did and was thrown out of the store bodily by the indignant Hannah. The name Hannah must signify size, for another Hannah, Hannah Grossman, carried a muff large enough for a child to crawl through.

One of our most famous people was Deborah Sampson who fought in the Revolutionary War. She secretly wove herself a man's suit and enlisted. Finally, when she was seriously wounded, a doctor found her out. When she donned a dress and revealed her secret to the men with whom she had fought side by side, they were astonished as you can well imagine.

You've all heard of our famous midget Lavinia Warren, better known as Mrs. Tom Thumb, but did you know that Middleboro also had a giant? The Indians told a story of a man of great strength with whom they had many contests. They claimed he was killed during Philip's War. This story was confirmed when a few years ago his remains were found. The skeleton measured 7 feet, 8 inches and a double row of teeth were found in each of his jaws.

Without a doubt Middleboro's past has been eventful as well as picturesque. The first settlers provided a firm foundation upon which we must now build. They have created a past to be proud of and have left the future to us.

Note: This essay was written by Phyllis Holt, Valedictorian of the Class of 1948, Middleboro High School.

Let There Be Light . . .

(continued from page 12)

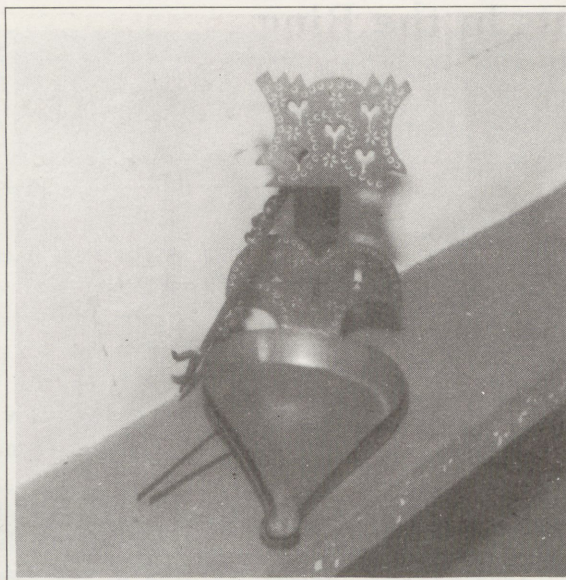
Early street lights were oil lamps on posts, which necessitated having a lamplighter go from light to light with a ladder and torch to brighten the way for evening travelers. My mother used to tell me how, when she was young, she would stand by the window at twilight, watching for the lamplighter.

Gas for the town was manufactured in the early 1800s by John O'Donnell in a building on Pierce Street. In 1868, Nahum Wilbur bought the business and moved to a location on Vine Street.

In 1906, there were about 150 customers using gas, which was said to be of poor quality.

In 1888, a committee consisting of Joseph E. Beals, George Wood and Eugene LeBaron was chosen at the town meeting to look into the possibility of finding a company to "furnish the town with the most and best street lighting." Eventually arc lights were installed and they acted in a most peculiar manner, as they constantly flickered and sputtered. For years, in the interest of saving the town some money, they were not turned on when the moon was bright.

In 1922, a few lights of 600 candle power were put into use on a trial basis and, in 1928, many more were installed. The merchants were so pleased with this great improvement they decided to celebrate. On September 28 there were special window displays, with prizes awarded for the best windows. There was a big parade and the Bay State Band gave a concert at Everett Square. A vaudeville troupe entertained at the Four Corners and the Eastern Star ladies put on a turkey dinner at the Commercial Club for the public officials of Middleboro and several surrounding towns.



THIS ELABORATE lamp is one of dozens in the Middleborough Historical Museum's collection of early lighting devices. The collection includes primitive "crusies," which were pear-sharped dishes holding wicks, all types of candlesticks, and many different types of lanterns.

Thus have we the progress of lighting from the days of rush lights and candles to the Great White Way.

Elizabeth Snow, a resident of Carver, recently co-authored a history of that town. She is a member of the Middleborough Historical Association.

"A Good Man . . ."

(continued from page 10)

that he parked in the driveway to the right of the house. Whenever the fire alarm sounded during the night, I would sit at my window and watch for the chief to respond. In a matter of minutes (sometimes I would time him), he would be out of the house and into his car, lights on, and dash down South Main Street, with the red light attached to the front bumper flashing. This bit of nostalgia brings back many memories for me of the early and mid-1930s.

Mr. Philbrook was one of the first owners of an automobile in Middleboro. His daughter, Mertie E. Romaine, tells us in the "History of the Town of Middleboro, Massachusetts, 1905-1965," of her first automobile ride when she accompanied Carlton W. Maxim and her father on a trip

to Myricks early in 1900. The car had no top and only one door in the rear. The road was a rough one, and the two men in front had to keep close watch on their passenger in the rear so that she would not fall out.

At the banquet honoring his years of service to the town of Middleboro, Speaker Rudolph F. King of the House of Representatives, said, "When I think of George Philbrook's years of unselfish service, I am reminded of all that Massachusetts stands for and has stood for in this nation. Massachusetts has become great because men like George Philbrook have lived and worked within the state."

In closing one might say that he was a good man and a great asset to the Town of Middleboro.

Hats in the Ring . . .

(continued from page 9)

two precincts, Roosevelt received 545 votes; Wilson sneaked into second place with 378 votes ahead of Taft with 360 votes. Roosevelt, however, was unable to carry the state and, in fact, finished third behind Taft. In total, Wilson won 40 states, Roosevelt six and Taft two.

Whether it was favoritism for Roosevelt or a genuine progressive Republican impulse in Middleboro, the town favored Progressive Party candidates in 7 of 13 races on the ballot, giving progressive candidates the town's first vote for president, governor, lieutenant governor secretary of state, state treasurer, 2nd Plymouth District senator (Alvin C. Howes of Middleboro) and Plymouth County commissioner (Lyman P. Thomas of Middleboro).

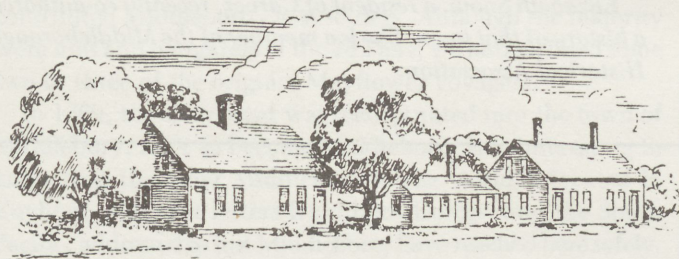
However, in the long run, progressive Republicanism fared badly, both in Middleboro and the nation as a whole. Though the 1913 elections saw Middleboro give its first place vote to eight progressives in 13 races, it was beginning to lose influence to the Republican Party which began to re-absorb its lost members. In fact, in a three-way race in 1913 for the 7th Plymouth District between Middleboro residents Charles N. Atwood (R), Stephen O'Hara (D) and Lyman P. Thomas (P), Thomas finished third, an indication of progressivism's waning appeal. Running for the same position in 1914, Thomas was the only Progressive candidate on the ballot not to be relegated to a third place finish by the Middleboro voters. In

fact, the 1914 elections saw few Progressives run and they even failed to contest the gubernatorial race. Many Bull Moose Progressives not rejoining the Republican Party in 1914 found solace in such candidates as progressive-minded David I. Walsh, the successful Democratic candidate for governor in 1914 and 1915.

Roosevelt's declination of the 1916 Progressive presidential nomination and his endorsement of fence-straddling Republican candidate Charles Evans Hughes effectively mended the breach between Republicans and Bull Moose Progressives. In the 1916 elections, Middleboro voted overwhelmingly for Hughes, who received 743 votes to Wilson's 476. The Democratic share of the 1916 Middleboro vote, however, was nearly 35% greater than the Democratic share in 1912, while the Republican share was down 12.5% from the combined Republican-Progressive share of 1912, an indication that many Middleboro Bull Moose Progressives had moved to the Democratic Party by 1916.

In a fitting epitaph for Bull Moose Progressivism, Roosevelt wrote James R. Garfield, son of President Garfield and Roosevelt's secretary of the interior: "We have fought the good fight, we have kept the faith and have nothing to regret."

Michael Maddigan, who lives in Middleboro, is currently a graduate student at Syracuse University, where he is concentrating on international studies. A graduate of Stonehill College, he worked for the Middleborough Historical Museum during the summer as a high school student.



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MIDDLEBORO HIGH SCHOOL Class of 1922 included, front row, from left, Edna Kelly, Doris Sousa, Alice Robinson Shaw, Dorothy Shurtleff, Polly Stetson Wood, Thelma Weeman McGrady, Florence McGrady Mills, Annie Lewis, Alberta Hathaway; second row, Sally Fillebrown, Mildred McCrillis, Edith Gay Haggerty, Alice Rice Shurtleff, Eloise Phillips, Sarah Boucher, James Dennett, Principal

Walter Sampson; third row, Elsie McCarthy, Kathleen Maddigan, Priscilla Churbuck Shurtleff, Marjorie McClusky Hanson, Mary Wood Butler, Arleen Callan, Esther Bryant, Dorothy Ellie Mitchell, Royce Oliver; fourth row, Clyde Turner, James Peck, Sherman Monroe, Percy Churbuck, Sidney Buckman, Milford Dennett, Morrill Ryder. (Photo courtesy of Esther Bryant)

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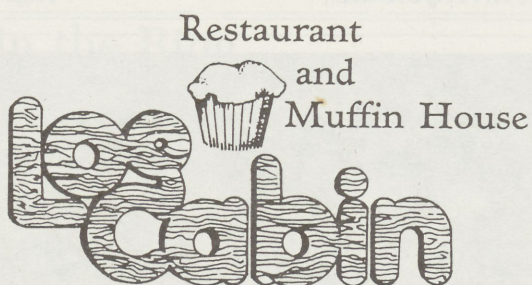
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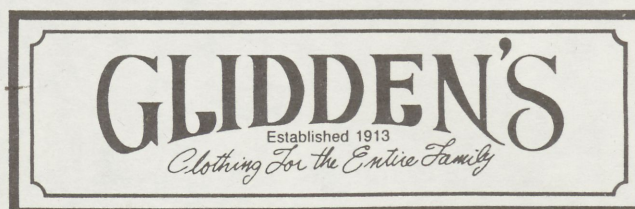
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